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ABSTRACT

Designed to divide recall protocols for subsequent category analysis, this instrument equates surface syntactic forms with semantic ideas. The instrument defines two types of syntactic proposition--a base syntactic proposition, the simplest independent prediction (structurally) that may be used to convey information, and an alternate syntactic proposition, which can become a base syntactic proposition with the substitution or addition of words. Twenty-three alternative syntactic propositions are listed, subdivided into three groups (1) relativization (intact), (2) relativization (elipsis), and (3) complementation. Validity, reliability, and normative data are included. (This document is one of those reviewed in The Research Instruments Project (TRIP) monograph "Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts, Volume 2," published by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. The TRIP review, included here as an introduction to the instrument, describes the instrument's category (reading), title, author, date, age range (primary to postsecondary), purpose, and physical characteristics.) (HTH)

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The Syntactic Proposition for Protocol Analysis.

The measurement instruments contained in this document have been reviewed in a monograph (cited below) edited by William T. Fagan, Charles Cooper, and Julie Jensen, for The Research Instruments Project (TRIP), and funded by a grant from the Trustees of the NCTE Research Foundation:

Measures for Research and Evaluation
in the
English Language Arts
Volume II

The purpose of the editors has been to select and review measurement instruments pertaining to all aspects of research and evaluation in the English language arts, e.g. language and language development, literacy, literature, reading (including comprehension, teacher-pupil interaction, etc.), writing, and teacher knowledge and attitudes. In order to make some of the actual instruments reviewed more readily available, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) has cooperated with the editors by processing selected instruments into the ERIC system (see the 42 documents assigned Clearinghouse accession numbers CS 207 904-945).

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CS 207911

Category: Reading

Title: The Syntactic Proposition for Protocol Analysis

Author: William T. Fagan

Age Range: Primary to post-secondary

Description of the Instrument:

Purpose: To divide recall protocols into units for subsequent category analysis.

Date of Construction: 1978

Physical Description: Various linguistic units have been used in the analysis of recall protocols. Such units include the sentence, t-unit, clause, phrase, semantic proposition. The semantic proposition corresponds to a semantic idea and consists of a relation and one or more arguments. However, its application for dividing protocols is abstract in that the propositions in the protocol (protocol text base) are compared to the template text base which is the idealized representation of the meaning of a given text. An assumption underlying the syntactic proposition is that each idea unit that the subject intends to convey must be expressed syntactically. Conversely it was assumed that by starting with the surface syntactic forms, these could be equated with semantic ideas.

A Syntactic Proposition may be of two types:

1. A base syntactic proposition is the simplest independent prediction (structurally) which may be used to convey information. Examples are:

(D) N V (Adj) (Adv)* (PP)*	Birds fly
	The horse is black
	Tom works hard
	May smiles sweetly
	The pony runs swiftly through the fields
	Tom is diligent always in school
(d) N V (Adv)* (N) (N)	Terry gave the dog a bone
	The sergeant angrily gave the rookie a rebuke

2. Alternate syntactic propositions. These are termed "alternate" to the base syntactic proposition for with the substitution or addition of words, these could become base syntactic propositions.

*(Adv) may occur at various positions within the sentence.

*(PP) may not occur immediately after N.

Eg. The boy with the books is my brother.
There is a boy with books.

or

The boy has books.

Eg. He hid where the cook keeps the food.
The cook keeps the food there.

Twenty three alternate syntactic propositions have been identified which may be subdivided into three groups: Relativization (Intact), Relativization (Ellipsis) and Complementation.

In the Relativization (Intact) group, all words are present in the structure although there may be a substitution (eg. Have you seen the car which I bought?)

In the Relativization (Ellipsis) group, words must be added to alternate form to make up a base structure. These words are inferred (by the researcher) from the accompanying base structure.

Eg. Have you seen the car I bought?

The Complementation structures "complement" or "complete" a base structure.

Eg. The exercises are designed to help you.

Validity, Reliability and Normative Data:

Interater reliability from several research projects using two independent raters have produced correlation coefficients ranging from .92 to 96.

Related Documents:

Brake, Delphine M. An investigation of oral and silent reading with low and high achievers. Unpublished masters thesis. The University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, 1980.

Fagan, William T. A comparison of the oral language of children, ages nine, ten and eleven. A Research Report. Canada Council Grant, S76-0563. The University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, 1978.

Fagan, William T. A longitudinal study of grade five and grade eleven students' written language and a comparison to teachers' written language. The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1981

Fagan, William T. A longitudinal study of grade five and grade eleven students' oral language and a comparison to teachers' oral language. Unpublished Research Paper. The University of Alberta, 1979.

THE SYNTACTIC PROPOSITION

The Syntactic Proposition may be of two types: a base syntactic proposition and an alternate syntactic proposition. The former is the simplest independent predication(structurally) which may be used to convey information, corresponding roughly to a simple sentence, while the latter depends on the base form for its interpretation but with the addition or substitution of words could itself become a base form.

Twenty-three alternate syntactic propositions have been identified which may be grouped into three categories: Relativization (Intact), Relativization (Ellipsis) and Complementation. Examples are given below:

RELATIVIZATION (INTACT)

Adjective Clause:

I admire my English teacher who is a scholar.

Adverbial Clause:

He hid where the cook keeps the food.
He ran when he was the policeman.
He ran as if his life depended on it.
The teenagers threatened to throw his boots in the water so he threw them his golf balls.

Adverbial Expansion of Man + S:

The lawyer spoke so rapidly that he confused the jury.

Comparative:

He had to work as hard as the other men worked.

RELATIVIZATION (ELLIPSIS)

Adjective (only in front of the noun):

He was a brave boy.
The sick man could not go out fishing.

Participle + N (only in front of the noun; otherwise it is classed as a WH Auxiliary/verb):

He stood by the closed door.
The howling dog kept me awake all night.
Melting snow causes floods.

Appositive:

They took him to his father, the captain of the ship.

Genitive:

Then they heard the ship's horn.
The captain of the boat said he'd have to work.

With Phrase:

The man with the golf cart started after him.
The teenagers with the car were hunting for golf balls.

Subject/verb: The subject or verb is stated for the base syntactic proposition and could be repeated to form another base syntactic proposition

The room seemed lonely and damp.
He took out a duffle bag and some boots and then turned off the light.
Some causes of floods are heavy rains, melting snow and rushing streams.

If the expression is considered compound the subject/verb alternate proposition does not apply.

More and more snow came down. They put in dykes and stuff.
People can build walls or dykes.

N + Preposition phrase: A preposition phrase follows a noun in the basic syntactic proposition and with the insertion of a verb would become a base proposition structure.

I saw the boy on the golfcourse.
He found the boy in the cupboard.
NOT: He hid in the cupboard.

WH:

He has a book he wants to show you.

WH + Auxiliary/verb:

Then he hopped on this schooner called the Jean Frances.
He saw the boy running through the field.
He saw the water rushing down the hillside.

(That) + S as Object:

I know he is a good fisherman.

Clause: The marker for a subordinate clause (adverbial, adjective) is omitted.

And the lowlands are the ones which get most water and moisture.
But when it comes and doesn't go away, the water will rise higher and higher.
If it snows lots, stays late and melts quickly, it may flood.
You may prevent floods by planting grass so that the grass will hold the soil in place, so that it won't bring all the soil with it and make the river over flow.

Comparative: The complete base syntactit proposition is not repeated within the comparison but may be inferred.

He had to work just like the other men.
This book is more interesting than that one.

When "like" is used as a preposition and not as a conjunction, the expression does not constitute a comparative.

They may get affected by diseases like cholera.

COMPLEMENTATION

That + S as Object/Subject/Complement:

I believe that he has made the team.
That he has made the team is obvious.
It is surprising that we won the game.
It appeared that she would make it.

WH + S as Object/Subject:

I know what annoys him.
What annoys me most is his arrogance.

Infinitive as Object:

I tried to answer the question correctly.

Infinitive of Purpose:

The exercises are designed to help you.

Ing-Nominalization:

Snow can cause floods by melting too rapidly.

Tom's hot rodding disturbed his mother. She objected to his continuous complaining.

Ing-Nominalization of Purpose:

I have a knack for getting into trouble.

That + S as Object Quotation (the quotation must contain a verb):

The captain said, "You will have to do your share of work."
The men asked, "How much are you selling the golf balls for?"